



Increase in workers' wages to at least Rs30,000 demanded

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ISLAMABAD: Capitalists have crushed the unity of labourers and workers because the working class has always led movements against dictatorship and exploitation, Senator Mian Raza Rabbani said at the National Labour Conference on Wednesday.

Senator Rabbani was addressing the All Pakistan Workers Confederation's (APWC) National Labour Conference at the National Press Club as chief guest.

At the event, he called on the working class, patriotic forces and all political parties to strengthen their unity to defeat terrorist, a crime against mankind, and make the nation's struggle successful to establish a society based on equality, fraternity and social justice.

He said the dignity of work and democracy were essential for the welfare of the nation, but elites had suppressed struggling people and did not let them rise.

Senator Rabbani criticised the new government for several U-turns in policy statements and said he feared that the government would cede to harsh International Monetary Fund terms against workers and labourers rights.

Labour leaders at the conference demanded that Prime Minister Imran Khan and provincial chief ministers implement the manifestos of their respective parties to tackle poverty and unemployment. The speakers also demanded that the gap between rich and poor be reduced.

Veteran trade unionist Khurshid Ahmed, the APWC general secretary, also presented an annual report and resolution, which called on the government to increase the wages of workers employed in the private sector, in industries, trade and banking, to at least Rs30,000 per month and to increase their pension to Rs15,000 per month.

The conference also demanded the implementation of labour laws through independent labour inspection machinery in accordance with International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention No.81, which Pakistan has ratified.

It was highlighted that there are just 571 labour officers to inspect thousands of industrial and commercial enterprises, while there is a negligible setup for the agricultural sector.

The conference demanded the restoration of fundamental trade union rights in the banking sector, the National Database and Regulation Authority and agricultural workers in conformity with ILO conventions 87 and 95, which Pakistan has also ratified.

Free medical facilities under the 1965 Social Security Scheme Ordinance should also be restored to workers after their superannuation, rural reforms should be introduced and state land distributed to landless peasants and the abuse of children, bonded labour and harassment and discrimination against women should be abolished.

The conference also re-elected Rubina Jamil as the president of the APWC as well as other office-bearers.

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